

# *News from the Wyoming Department of Health*

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## **Alcohol and Tobacco Compliance Check Successes on the Rise**

Wyoming's "compliance check" program, which determines whether retail establishments are illegally selling alcohol or tobacco to youth, is seeing growing success according to the Wyoming Department of Health.

A compliance check involves the law enforcement practice of sending a minor into a retail establishment to try buying alcohol or tobacco. If the clerk complies with the law by asking the minor for identification or refusing to sell, the store is said to have successfully "passed" the compliance check. If the clerk provides the minor with alcohol or tobacco, the store "fails" the compliance check and law enforcement personnel may cite the clerk for illegal sale to a minor.

Of the nearly 1000 alcohol compliance checks conducted by Wyoming law enforcement officers last year, 85 percent of liquor stores refused to sell alcohol to underage persons. This is a significant increase from a 79 percent compliance rate in 2008. Of the more than 730 tobacco compliance checks, 84 percent of establishments refused to sell tobacco to underage youth in 2009. For 2008, more than 680 tobacco checks were completed for an 83 percent compliance rate.

"These numbers reflect a growing awareness among Wyoming's retailers of the importance of keeping alcohol and tobacco out of the hands of our kids," said Dr. Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director and state health officer. "That awareness is an important step toward reducing easy access to these unhealthy substances."

Sherard said research shows that delaying a young person's first use of tobacco and alcohol can significantly decrease health-related problems later in life.

"The ongoing efforts in Wyoming communities to help reduce underage drinking and tobacco use are a critical element of our overall efforts," Sherard said.

The Wyoming Department of Health contracts with the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police (WASCOP) to coordinate compliance check efforts across the state.

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